



## Center for Army Leadership

Technical Report 2010-3

### **2009 CENTER FOR ARMY LEADERSHIP ANNUAL SURVEY OF ARMY LEADERSHIP (CASAL): ARMY CIVILIANS**

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# The Center for Army Leadership

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| 14. ABSTRACT<br>Since 2005, the Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL) has been an established effort by the Center for Army Leadership (CAL), Combined Arms Center (CAC) to assess and track trends in Army leader attitudes of leader development, the quality of leadership, and the contribution of leadership to mission accomplishment. In 2009, the survey was extended to Department of Army Civilians. New data from 4,721 managers (supervisors of supervisors), 1,086 first line supervisors (supervisors of employees), and 3,607 non-supervisor employees were collected on over 200 items dealing with quality of leadership (overall quality, effectiveness of work performance), climate and situational factors within the work environment (e.g., Job Characteristics Model), and quality of leader development (superior support for leader development, efficacy of practices, organization training efficacy). This report supplements the main survey findings CAL Technical Report 2010-1, and provides a snapshot of civilian data and compares findings with secondary sources. |                                    |  |                               |   |
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# **2009 CENTER FOR ARMY LEADERSHIP**

## **ANNUAL SURVEY OF ARMY LEADERSHIP (CASAL):**

### **ARMY CIVILIANS**

#### **PURPOSE**

This report discusses Army civilian findings of the 2009 CASAL, and supports the technical report of main findings (Keller-Glaze, Riley, Steele, Harvey, Hatfield, & Bryson, 2010). In 2005, the Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL) was established by the Center for Army Leadership (CAL), Combined Arms Center (CAC) to assess and track trends of leader perceptions on leader development, the quality of leadership, and the contribution of leadership to mission accomplishment. The most recent administration (November 2009 – December 2009) extended this survey, for the first time, to Department of Army civilians. Over 26,000 Army civilians were surveyed, of which 9,414 participated for a response rate of 36%. The sampling error for this level of response is +/- 1%. This means that unless otherwise stated, the actual true percentage among civilians may be the stated percentage, or one percent higher or lower.

The sample of Army civilians that responded to the CASAL closely represent the DoD workforce with regard to gender (66% male, 34% female) and ethnic origin (92% not of Hispanic or Latino origin). Representativeness with regard to race varied slightly, though not to a large degree; Whites (+7.8%), American Indian or Alaska Natives (+3%), and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders (+0.6%) were slightly over-represented, while Black or African Americans (-2%) and Asians (-1.5%) were slightly under-represented. The reported education level of survey respondents exceeded the levels of the DoD workforce, with 28% holding bachelor degrees (compared to 24% of population) and 29% holding graduate degrees (compared to 12% of population).

Sixty-one percent of supervisors and 50% of non-supervisors previously served in the military; about one-fourth (23%) served in the military long enough to be retirement eligible. The average tenure of civilians in their current organization was 103 months; average time in current position was 49 months; average time in current grade or pay level was 46 months; and average time reporting to current leader/supervisor was 26 months.

Findings for Army civilians are addressed in three key areas:

- Quality of Leadership
- Climate and Situational Factors within the Working Environment
- Quality of Leader Development.

## **ANALYTIC NOTES ON SUPERVISORY STATUS CLASSIFICATION**

While current self-reported position was considered in determining civilian cohort group membership, the primary method of group assignment was a multi-step process that examined consistency of responses on survey items. To be included in one of the supervisory cohorts, civilian respondents had to respond “yes” that they directly supervised subordinates (either civilian or uniformed personnel) and provide the number (greater than zero) of direct reports they supervised. Respondents who also indicated their direct report subordinates were supervisors themselves were classified as managers/senior supervisors, while those who indicated their subordinates were not supervisors were classified as first line supervisors/leaders. As a final determining factor, an item on the survey asked respondents to select a response that best represented their current position. These responses included short definitions of supervisory responsibilities, and were used to classify any remaining respondents not yet classified due to missing data for the other items.

## **ORGANIZATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Findings on the quality of leadership and climate and situational factors within the working environment include consideration of all Army civilian respondents, while findings on the quality of leader development focus on responses by Army civilian leaders. A civilian leader is defined as an Army civilian that holds direct supervisory responsibility for other Army civilians and/or uniformed personnel. For the purposes of this research, civilian leaders are classified as either managers/senior supervisors or first line supervisors/leaders, while civilians that do not hold direct supervisory duties are classified as employees/non-supervisors.

- Managers/senior supervisors – supervise direct reports who are also supervisors (N = 4,721)
- First line supervisors/leaders – supervise employees/non-supervisors (N = 1,086)
- Employees/non-supervisors – do not hold direct supervisory duties (N = 3,607)

## MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings discussed in greater detail are:

- Over 80% of civilians are satisfied with their career working for the Army up to this point. Most civilians report strong skill variety, work significance, challenge-skill balance (i.e., engagement), and autonomy. However, feedback and information flow are weaker areas, especially at the non-supervisory level (75% and 65% favorability, respectively).
- Civilians are largely affectively committed to their work (staying because of enjoyment), whereas uniformed personnel show more continuance commitment (staying because of difficulties associated with losing organization membership).
- Civilians view stress from a high workload as *a moderate problem* 50% (52% supervisors) and *a serious problem* 20% (33% supervisors).
- Interpersonal trust among civilians is strong, but lowest at the peer level (i.e., 70% trust at least “slightly” and 30% “not at all”).
- Civilians report that 50% of their unit’s or organization’s leaders are effective (supervisors reported over 55%). The vast majority believe that work in their unit is completed correctly and timely (85%), and at a high level of quality that exceeds expectations (74%).
- Civilian leader development occurring within units is weak. Half of civilian leaders believe that their unit/organization places a *high priority* on leader development and rate their supervisor as effective in creating or calling attention to leader development opportunities; less than one-third report that the development occurring within their organization has a large impact, and less than half believe their last performance counseling session was useful. Contributing factors may include that only half of civilian leaders agree that they have sufficient time to develop their subordinates; and lack of formal requirements for civilian leaders to develop subordinates.
- Work experience and self development are perceived to positively prepare civilian leaders for higher levels of leadership or responsibility. Perceptions of the effectiveness of institutional training and education, while favorable, lag behind work experience and self development domains.
- The Advanced Course, Intermediate Course, and Basic Course are seen as effective in improving civilian leadership capabilities and preparing students to influence others, to deal with unfamiliar and uncertain situations, and to develop the leadership skills of their subordinates. The Foundation Course, which is completed via distributed learning (dL), is less effective in preparing students for these areas.

## I. Quality of Leadership

### Perceptions of Leader Quality

Perceptions of leader quality are displayed in Table 1. This table demonstrates that the lowest ratings are when the rating target or item is vaguer and generally references “leaders in their unit or organization” (i.e., 60% managers/senior supervisors, 55% first line supervisors/leaders, and 50% employees/non-supervisors). Ratings for superiors also show a distinct pattern, in that they are always lowest from each rater source (i.e., 70% senior supervisors, 66% first line supervisors, and 60% employees rate their superiors as effective leaders). This table also shows inconsistencies in which average first line supervisor/leader are rated effective by 82% of senior supervisors, 69% by other first line supervisors, and only 60% by employees. Thus, effectiveness as an item is affected by the rating source and the rating target. Note that similar ratings of superiors were observed in the 2002 civilian phase of the Army Training and Leader Development Study (ATLDS) with 63% of leaders rated effective at leading employees to do their job well (CAC, 2003). In 2006 the Armywide Civilian Personnel Attitude Survey reported 77% of supervisors and 70% of employees agreed that their immediate supervisor/team leader was “overall doing a good job” (Civilian Personnel Evaluation Agency, 2006a, 2006b).

**Table 1. Comparison of Leader Effectiveness by Rater Source and Rating Reference.**

| <b><u>Rating Source</u></b>    | <b><u>Rating Reference</u></b>               | <b><u>% Effective</u></b> |
|--------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Managers/Senior Supervisors    | Percent of Effective Leaders in organization | 60%                       |
|                                | Subordinates                                 | 82%                       |
|                                | Peers  | 74%                       |
|                                | Superiors                                    | 70%                       |
| First line Supervisors/Leaders | Percent of Effective Leaders in organization | 55%                       |
|                                | Subordinates                                 | 68%                       |
|                                | Peers  | 69%                       |
|                                | Superiors                                    | 66%                       |
| Employees/Non-Supervisors      | Percent of Effective Leaders in organization | 50%                       |
|                                | Superiors                                    | 60%                       |

Unsurprisingly, all Army civilians work with other Army civilian personnel (about 98%). Civilians hold favorable views about the abilities of their fellow civilians, as a large percentage believe they are effective or very effective in:

- Completing their work on time – 85%
- Completing their work correctly – 85%
- Completing their work with quality that exceeds expectations – 74%

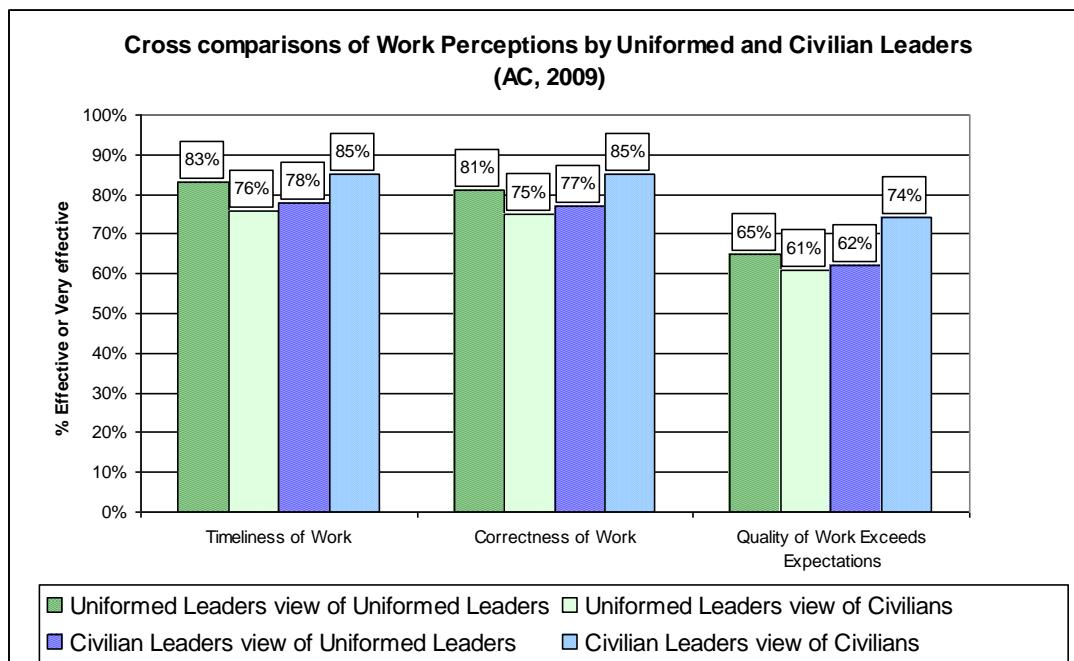
No more than 8% of Army civilians believe their fellow civilians are ineffective in these areas.

Army civilian perceptions of uniformed leaders are also generally favorable, though not as favorable as their perceptions of their fellow civilians. More than half of Army civilian leaders (62% of managers/senior supervisors and 55% of first line supervisors/leaders) work with Army uniformed personnel (peers at their level). This is less often the case for employees/non-supervisors (43%). Civilians who work with uniformed leaders believe uniformed leaders are effective or very effective in:

- Completing their work on time – 78%
- Completing their work correctly – 77%
- Completing their work with quality that exceeds expectations – 62%

The inverse perspective is also worthy of examination, as a similar pattern is observed. Uniformed leaders generally hold a favorable view of Army civilians in completing their work on time, correctly, and with quality that exceeds expectations, though uniformed leaders more often rate their fellow uniformed leaders favorably than they do the Army civilians with whom they work (see Exhibit 1).

**Exhibit 1. Comparison of Work Perceptions for Army Uniformed Leaders and Army Civilians.**



## Army Core Leader Competencies and Attributes

### *Ratings for Superiors*

Most Army civilians (79%) report directly to a civilian leader; 21% report to a uniformed leader. Between 50% and 73% of Army civilians rate their civilian superior as effective or very effective across the competencies. The top three competencies that represent strengths of Army civilian leaders are (% effective):

- *Gets Results* – 73%
- *Prepares Self* – 69%
- *Leads Others* – 67%

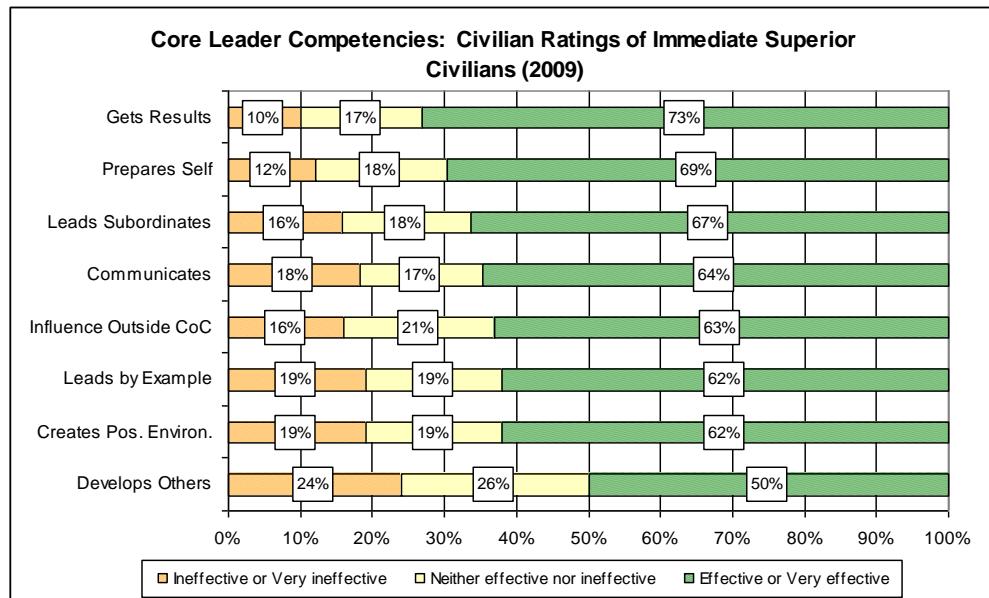
The competency with the lowest percentage of effective ratings for superior civilian leaders is *Develops Others*. Half of Army civilians (50%) rate their superior effective in *developing their subordinates*; while nearly one-fourth (24%) rate them as ineffective. This finding is also common among ratings for uniformed leaders.

Army civilian leaders are also rated favorably in demonstrating most leader attributes, though it should be noted that some attributes are seemingly less applicable to Army civilians than they are to uniformed leaders (e.g., *Warrior Ethos, Tactical Knowledge, Military Bearing & Physical Fitness*). The top rated attributes which represent strengths of Army civilian leaders are (% effective):

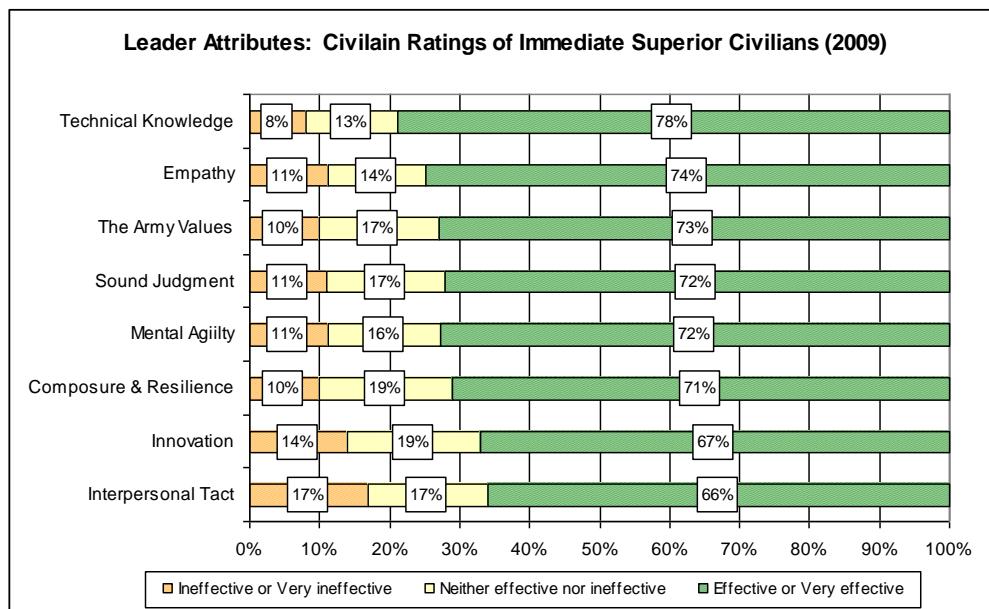
- *Technical Knowledge* – 78%
- *Empathy* – 74%
- *The Army Values* – 73%

The attributes with the lowest percentage of effective ratings for superior civilian leaders are *Interpersonal Tact* (66%) and *Innovation* (67%). Uniformed leaders are rated relatively weaker in these two areas. Civilian leader (superior) effectiveness on all competencies and attributes are presented in Exhibits 2 and 3.

## Exhibit 2. Army Civilian Superior Effectiveness on the Core Leader Competencies.



## Exhibit 3. Army Civilian Superior Effectiveness on the Leader Attributes.



### ***Civilian Subordinates***

Between 63% and 90% of Army leaders (uniformed and civilian) rate their civilian *subordinates* as effective or very effective across the eight competencies. As observed with other items, ratings for subordinates are more favorable than ratings for superiors. While Army civilian leaders more often rate their civilian subordinates as effective or very effective compared to uniformed leaders, two of the top three rated competencies are the same:

- *Gets Results* – 90%
- *Prepares Self* – 85%
- *Communicates* – 84%

The competencies with the lowest percentage of effective ratings for civilian subordinates are *Develops Others* and *Extends Influence beyond the Chain of Command*, a finding also common among ratings for subordinate uniformed leaders. The percentages of Army civilian leaders that rate their subordinate civilians as effective or very effective are:

- *Extends Influence Beyond the Chain of Command* – 74%
- *Develops Others* – 70%

Worthy of mention is that 63% of uniformed leaders rate their subordinate Army civilians as effective or very effective on the competency *Develops Others* (compared to 70% of civilian leaders), suggesting uniformed leaders see more room for improvement in how their direct report civilians develop their own subordinates.

Army civilians are rated favorably on all leader attributes by their superiors. Civilian leaders most often rate their subordinate Army civilians as effective in demonstrating *Technical Knowledge* (91%), *Empathy* (89%), and *Sound Judgment* (87%).

### **Leader Effectiveness in Other Areas**

Army civilian leaders are also effective in demonstrating other aspects of leadership. Army civilians rate their immediate superior civilian leader as effective or very effective in the following areas (% effective):

- Understanding the link between their mission and the higher mission – 82%
- Developing a quick understanding to complex situations – 76%
- Setting the standard for integrity and character – 72%
- Dealing with unfamiliar situations – 70%
- Influencing others to accomplish the unit or organizational missions – 68%
- Balancing subordinate needs with mission requirements – 66%
- Building effective teams – 61%

The percentage of leaders who are effective at dealing with unfamiliar situations is similar to what was observed in 2002 (CAC, 2003), but the degree of effectiveness has increased since then from 13% to 32% who are rated very effective. Civilian leader effectiveness in *building effective teams* is an area that shows room for improvement, as nearly one-fifth of subordinates (19%) rate their superior as ineffective or very ineffective in this area.

In summary, these findings suggest there are moderate to high levels of quality among Army civilian leaders. Managers/senior supervisors hold the most favorable view of the quality of leadership in general and the effectiveness of their subordinate leaders. Civilians are seen as effective in completing their work correctly and on time, and their work often exceeds quality expectations. Army civilian leaders and uniformed leaders share common strengths and developmental needs. Civilians are seen as effective in the competencies *Gets Results, Prepares Self, and Leads Others*, but show room for improvement in how they *Develop Others*. Civilians demonstrate competence in understanding how their mission supports a higher mission and understanding complex situations, though teambuilding is an area for improvement.

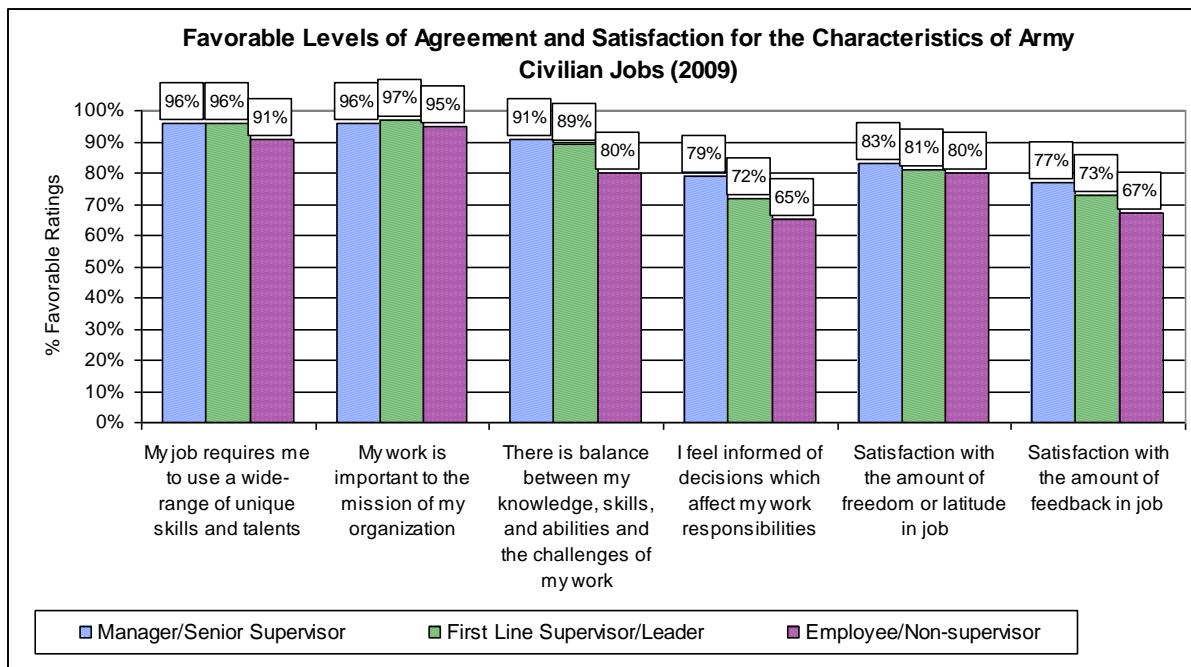
## **II. Climate and Situational Factors within the Working Environment**

### **Civilian Job Characteristics**

A majority of Army civilians agree that their jobs require a wide-range of unique skills and talents and that their work is important to their organization's mission. Civilian leaders (90%) also agree that there is balance between their knowledge, skills and abilities and the challenges of their work; however, employees/non-supervisors less often agree (80%). A 2006 survey revealed similar findings. It reported that 89% of civilian supervisors and 80% of employees agreed they knew how their work related to their agency's goals and priorities (Civilian Personnel Evaluation Agency, 2006a, 2006b).

Army civilians are generally (80% or more agree) satisfied with the amount of freedom or autonomy that they have in their job. However, Army civilians are less satisfied with the amount of feedback they receive in their job (either from the work itself or from other people), and being informed of decisions which affect their work responsibilities (see Exhibit 4). This is more often the case for employees/non-supervisors (67% and 65%, respectively) than for civilian leaders. However, these issues do not appear to be critical. No more than 15% of any cohort indicate dissatisfaction with the amount of feedback they receive; 21% of employees/non-supervisors disagree they feel informed of decisions which affect their work responsibilities.

#### Exhibit 4. Favorable Ratings of Army Civilian Job Characteristics.



In sum, most of the core job characteristics and critical psychological states needed for job satisfaction and motivation are well-met; with the exception that feedback is lacking more at the lower level (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

#### Interpersonal Trust

Three items from the Behavioral Trust Inventory (BTI; Gillespie, 2003) were used to assess superior, peer, and subordinate trust among Army civilians:

- 23% of civilians confide in their **supervisor** about personal issues that are affecting their work to a great or very great extent (56% slight or moderate extent; 21% not at all).
- 18% of civilians discuss with their **peers** work-related problems or difficulties that could potentially be used against them to a great or very great extent (53% slight or moderate extent; 30% not at all).
- 17% of civilian leaders discuss with their **subordinates** how they honestly feel about their work, even negative feelings and frustration, to a great or very great extent (58% to a slight or moderate extent; 25% not at all).

Results indicate relatively higher trust in supervisors, and slightly lower trust in peers and subordinates. In comparison to uniformed leaders, civilians have the highest trust for supervisor and subordinate trust, but the lowest trust for their peers. This suggests that a competitive position among peers in the Army is not limited to only uniformed leaders, but may be a bigger concern among Army civilians. However, these results should be interpreted with caution because these items only focus on the disclosure portion of trust; Gillespie (2003) showed that trust can be conceptualized as both reliance and disclosure. The ATLDP study

found that about one third of Army civilians are not satisfied with the level of trust between supervisors and employees, and about one fourth of Army civilians and NCOs are not satisfied with the level of trust between civilians and Soldiers (CAC, 2003).

### **Workload and Stress**

Civilian leaders more often indicate stress from a high workload is a moderate or serious problem than do civilian employees/non-supervisors and Army uniformed leaders. About one-third of civilian leaders (35% managers/senior supervisors and 30% first line supervisors/leaders) believe stress from high workload is a serious problem, while about half (52% and 53%, respectively) believe it is a moderate problem. In comparison:

- Civilian employees/non-supervisors: 20% a serious problem; 50% a moderate problem
- AC uniformed leaders: 19% a serious problem; 53% a moderate problem

On the contrary, most Army civilians believe stress from boredom (low workload) is not a problem at all:

- Managers/senior supervisors – 89%
- First line supervisors/leaders – 85%
- Employees/non-supervisors – 76%
- Only 2% of Army civilians believe boredom is a serious problem.

Fifty-one percent of managers/senior supervisors along with 45% of first line supervisors/leaders and 42% of employees/non-supervisors agree that seeking help for stress-related problems (not limited to seeking help just at work) is accepted and encouraged in their unit or organization. While these figures may not appear overly favorable, it is important to note that more than one-third of civilians in these cohorts (34%, 39% and 40%, respectively) neither agree nor disagree that seeking help for stress-related problems is accepted and encouraged, while 17% disagree. Thus, this issue requires additional monitoring, but no action is recommended at this time.

### **Career Satisfaction, Commitment and Goals**

Career satisfaction and commitment among Army civilians is currently high. A large percentage of Army civilians are satisfied or very satisfied with their career working for the Army up to this point:

- Managers/senior supervisors – 91%
- First line supervisors/leaders – 87%
- Employees/non-supervisors – 82%
- No more than 8% of Army civilians in any cohort indicate dissatisfaction with their career thus far.
- CASAL findings are slightly more positive than results of a 2006 civilian survey, in which 78% of supervisors and 73% of employees indicated satisfaction with their job in general (Civilian Personnel Evaluation Agency, 2006a, 2006b).

Note that a positive bias is expected here because the sample contains only current employees, and those who are most dissatisfied have likely quit. Most civilian leaders (91%) and employees/non-supervisors (80%) feel committed to their team or immediate work group because of personal loyalty. Civilian leaders (75%) also more often agree they feel vested with problems affecting their team or immediate work group than do civilian employees/non-supervisors (59%). This finding is not unexpected, as those in leadership positions hold more responsibility and accountability for the outcomes of a work group or team, and should thus feel more vested in problems affecting the work. This is a positive indication that Army civilians (especially those in leadership positions) hold affective commitment, or an emotional or affective attachment to the Army. Strongly committed leaders identify with and enjoy working for the Army. Affective commitment is important because it is significantly related to job performance, absence, lateness, and turnover (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

Other indications of commitment include both career goals and employee retention beyond retirement eligibility, and provide insight into the future plans and current behaviors of Army civilians. The primary career goals of Army civilians vary from advancement to a higher GS/NSPS level, to serving in specific leadership positions, and becoming a leading expert in a specialty.

- One-third (32%) of managers/senior supervisors are currently eligible for retirement from the Federal System, as well as about one-fourth of first line supervisors/leaders and employees/non-supervisors (26% and 23%, respectively).
- About one-third of Army civilian leaders and 37% of employees/non-supervisors aspire to attain a higher GS or NSPS level.
- About one-fourth of civilian leaders are satisfied to stay at their current grade (29% managers/senior supervisors; 24% first line supervisors/leaders), compared to 17% of employees/non-supervisors.
- About one-fourth of civilians aspire to advance to a specific leadership position or level; 10% aspire to become a leading functional area expert.

While CASAL findings provide insight into the commitment and future aspirations of Army civilians, findings from other civilian studies (Civilian Personnel Evaluation Agency, 2006a, 2006b) represent more specific attitudes surrounding career progression:

- While more than half (54%) of supervisors indicated satisfaction with the career progression opportunities available, only 40% of employees were satisfied while another 41% were dissatisfied.
- 49% of employees were dissatisfied with opportunities to get a better job in the organization; 29% were satisfied.
- 47% of employees were dissatisfied with opportunities for promotion; 30% were satisfied.

In summary, Army civilians positively believe that their jobs require use of unique skills and talents, that there is balance between their knowledge and skills and the challenges of the job, and that the work they do is important to the organization's mission. That being said, feedback, and to a larger extent, information flow should be improved. Interpersonal trust, is generally strong, but could be improved at the peer level. Stress from a high workload is more often seen as a serious problem by civilian leaders than employee/non-supervisors and uniformed personnel. Army civilians show high levels of affective commitment toward the organization as well as satisfaction with their careers up to this point. Perceived opportunities for promotion or advancement likely contribute to civilian attitudes about career progression. However, retention of Army civilians is high given that one in four is currently eligible to retire but remain employed within the federal system. Out of all of these areas, stress from high workload appears to be the one that is most deserving of focus.

### **III. Quality of Leader Development**

#### **Support for Leader Development**

One of the greatest influences on leader development, and thus the quality of leadership, is the degree to which leader development is supported by an organization. The level of support for leader development can be seen by the priority it is given, the actions and support provided by superiors and senior leaders, and by the opportunities provided and the effectiveness of those opportunities. The perceptions of civilian leaders indicate current support for leader development in Army organizations appears to be moderately weak.

One-half of civilian leaders (51%) report that their unit or organization places a high or very high priority on leader development, while 20% believe it is treated as a low or very low priority. Likewise, about half of civilian leaders (51%) rate their supervisor as effective in creating or calling attention to leader development opportunities in their current assignment, while 21% believe they are ineffective. These percentages are lower than the 2002 results in which 64% of civilians agreed that their chain of command supported their training or development (CAC, 2003). However, one fourth of senior leaders (GO and SES level) in the ATLD study reported that from their vantage point supervisors and managers resist supporting leader development, and 45% indicated that nothing was being done to overcome barriers to leader development in their organizations (CAC, 2003).

Another indication of the priority an organization places on leader development is the amount of time leaders are able to devote to developing their subordinates. While 61% of civilian leaders report that they have sufficient time to direct and work with their subordinates, only 50% agrees that they have sufficient time to carry out the duties and responsibilities for developing their subordinates. More than one-fourth of civilian leaders (26%) disagree they have time to direct and work with their subordinates, and nearly one-third (32%) disagree they have sufficient time to develop them. These findings depict a common issue across the Army, as uniformed leaders perceive similar levels of support for leader development in their units or organizations.

Less than one-third (30%) of civilian leaders believe the leader development from within their unit has had a large or great impact on their development, while 39% believe it has had a small, very little or no impact. Less than half (47%) of civilian leaders believe the leader development (e.g., counseling, individual training, growth/stretch assignments) that occurs within their unit or organization is effective, while 20% rate it as ineffective.

Individual leader development actions that superiors take with their subordinates are weak. One-half of civilian leaders (52%) believe their immediate superior from their previous position actively prepared them to assume a higher level of responsibility or leadership, and one-fourth (26%) disagree. Civilian leaders less often rate their current supervisor as favorably. Forty-three percent of civilian leaders believe the feedback they received at their last performance counseling was useful in helping to set performance goals for improvement while more than one-fourth (27%) disagree. Related items on the 2006 Armywide Civilian Personnel Attitude Survey (Civilian Personnel Evaluation Agency, 2006a, 2006b) found more support for leader effectiveness in providing feedback:

- 59% of supervisors and 54% of employees agreed they received regular performance feedback.
- 66% of supervisors and 60% of employees agreed discussions about their performance with their supervisor/team leader were worthwhile.
- 62% of supervisors and 56% of employees agreed the feedback was useful.

The extent to which civilian leaders develop the leadership skills of their subordinates varies, but indications suggest that for the most part this is occurring. Two-thirds of civilian leaders (66%) believe the leaders in their unit or organization develop the leadership skills of their subordinates to a slight or moderate extent, while 22% believe this is done to a great or very great extent. Twelve percent believe this is not done at all. A high level of support for development was observed in the 2006 Armywide Civilian Personnel Attitude Survey, in which 80% of supervisors agreed supervisors/team leaders in their work unit support employee development. However, the item did not specify the development of subordinate *leadership skills* (Civilian Personnel Evaluation Agency, 2006b).

Unsurprisingly, virtually all civilian leaders (97% or more) supervise direct-report subordinate Army civilians. More than half of managers/senior supervisors (54%) indicate they develop the leadership skills of their subordinate Army civilians to a great or very great extent, while a smaller percentage (45%) develop them to a slight or moderate extent. In comparison, 43% of first line supervisors/leaders develop the leadership skills of their subordinate civilians to a great or very great extent, while 55% develop them to a slight or moderate extent. In other words, there is not a large amount of intentional subordinate leadership skills development at any level, but it appears to be about 10% higher at the more senior supervisory level. This is to be expected, and should be viewed positively because unlike uniformed leaders, there is no requirement for civilian leaders to develop the leadership skills of their subordinates.

Fewer Army civilian leaders (28% of managers/senior supervisors and 19% of first line supervisors/leaders) supervise direct-report subordinate uniformed personnel (Soldiers).

However, a comparable number of managers/senior supervisors (50%) indicate they develop the leadership skills of their subordinate Soldiers to a great or very great extent, or develop them to a slight or moderate extent (48%). In comparison, 41% of first line supervisors/leaders develop their subordinate Soldiers to a great or very great extent while 57% develop them to a slight or moderate extent.

In summary, two-thirds of civilian leaders report that subordinate leader development occurs in their organization to a slight or moderate extent, while nearly one-fourth believe it occurs to an extent greater than that. It is important to note how personal bias plays a role in these ratings, as most civilian leaders believe they develop the leadership skills of their subordinates to a greater extent than do the other leaders in their organization. Regardless, a positive finding is that only 12% of civilian leaders believe the development of subordinate leaders is not occurring at all in their organization. That being said, only half of civilians believe leader development is a high priority in their organization, and less than half believe their last performance counseling session was useful for helping to set performance goals for improvement. Leader development indicators are weak enough to suggest additional follow-up.

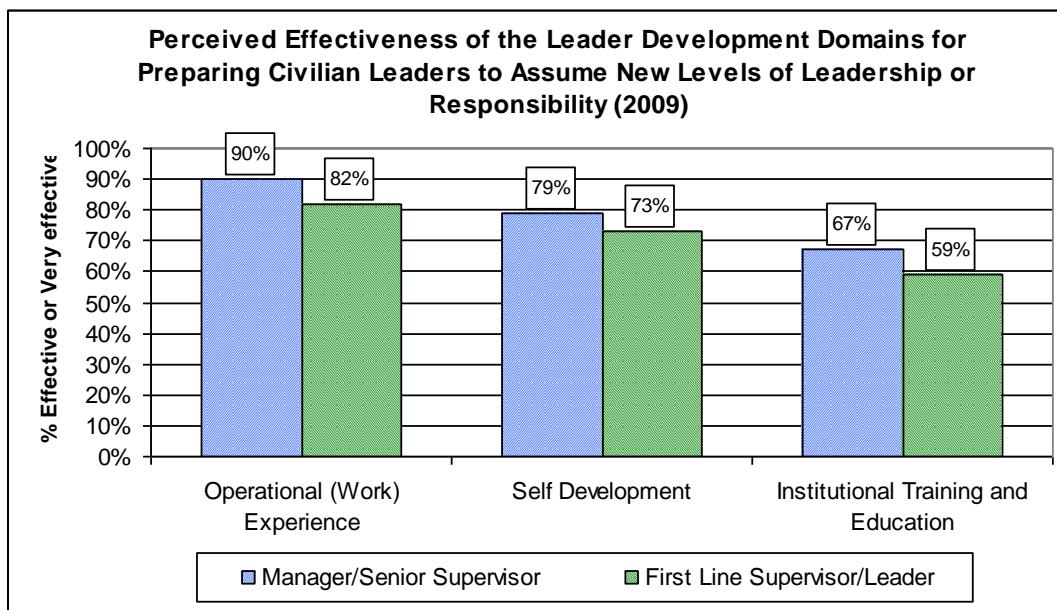
### **Preparing Civilian Leaders**

Army doctrine states that “leader development is the deliberate, continuous, sequential, and progressive process, grounded in Army values, [that] grows Soldiers and Army civilians into competent and confident leaders capable of decisive action. [This] is achieved through lifelong synthesis of the knowledge, skills, and experiences gained through the three separate but overlapping domains of institutional training and education, operational assignments, and self-development” (FM 6-22, p. 8-9). CASAL findings indicate the Army’s model for leader development is well supported by Army civilians, as a majority of civilian leaders perceive current leader development domains to be effective, though the perceived effectiveness of each domain varies (see Exhibit 5).

- Ninety percent of managers/senior supervisors and 82% of first line supervisors/leaders think that their work experience has been effective in preparing them to assume new levels of leadership or responsibility. This is a positive indication that operational experience (or ‘work experience’) positively grows civilian leaders. Only 4% of civilian leaders report that work experience has been ineffective in preparing them for increased leadership or responsibility.
- **Self development** is also favorably viewed by civilian leaders as a method of development, as 79% of managers/senior supervisors and 73% of first line supervisors/leaders believe self development has been effective in preparing them to assume new levels of leadership or responsibility; only 4% believe it has been ineffective. While less often rated as effective compared to work experience, self development activities also positively grow Army civilian leaders.

- **Institutional training and education** is weaker in terms of its perceived effectiveness in developing civilian leaders when compared to work experience and self development. Two-thirds of managers/senior supervisors (67%) believe institutional training courses have been effective in preparing them to assume new levels of leadership or responsibility. A smaller percentage of first line supervisors/leaders (59%) believe these experiences have been effective, though taken together, only about 11% of civilian leaders believe these experiences have been ineffective. It should be noted that only 32% of the respondents indicated recently taking a leadership course. This results in a smaller subsample for these items, of about 3,000. This increases the sampling error from +/-1% to about +/-2%. Data were not collected from those who had not recently completed a leadership course.

**Exhibit 5. The Perceived Effectiveness of the Leader Development Domains for Civilian Leaders.**



Given the high frequency of favorable ratings, it appears the three pillars of the Army leader development model (AR 350-1) are well supported in the development of Army civilian leaders. In addition to examining the perceived contribution of these domains of civilian leader development, it is worth noting that more than two-thirds (69%) of civilian leaders believe leadership ability is something that can be developed in a person, while 14% believe it is something with which a person is born.

Two notable differences between the results of civilian leaders and uniformed leaders are observed in these findings. First is the gap in perception between the effectiveness of work experience (operational domain) and self development (nearly 10% for both civilian leader cohorts), a difference not observed in ratings by uniformed leaders. Second, favorable effectiveness ratings of institutional training by managers/senior supervisors and first line supervisors/leaders (67% and 59%, respectively) are notably stronger than active component

(AC) uniformed leaders (51%), though a smaller percentage of civilian leaders participate in the leader development courses than do uniformed leaders. However, a finding common across all Army leaders is the lower favorability of ratings for institutional training relative to operational experience and self development.

### **Operational (Work) Experience**

The role of operational (work) experience is to help leaders “acquire the confidence, leadership, and the competence needed for more complex and higher level assignments” (AR 350-1, p.8). As mentioned previously, 90% of managers/senior supervisors and 81% of first line supervisors/leaders report that their work experience has been effective in preparing them for new levels of leadership. Further, duty assignments and on-the-job training (OJT) are work experiences that have a large developmental impact on Army civilian leaders. Seventy-four percent of managers/senior supervisors and 66% of first line supervisors believe duty assignments/OJT have had a large or great positive impact on their development, while 16% and 22%, respectively, believe it has had a moderate impact.

With regard to developmental work experiences, most civilian leaders (80% of managers/senior supervisors; 73% of first line supervisors/leaders) think that they know what experiences they need to improve as a leader in their current position (only 5% and 9%, respectively, indicate that they do not know). Most leaders draw this information from two main sources: from previous experience (79%) and from training and education (68%). Other, less frequently selected sources of this information include from mentors (50%), superiors (49%), peers (47%), and formal policies (30%). Comments captured the actual experiences Army civilian leaders believe they need to improve their leadership skills. Civilian leaders most frequently indicate they need experience in four areas (% of civilian leaders who provided a related comment):

- *Work or job experiences* (35%): Improve a specific job-related skill; develop through more time in a position; serve in a specific organizational position; and lead, counsel and develop subordinates.
- *Training* (26%): Receive training in a variety of technical or functional areas, but also in more generally applicable areas (e.g., communication, public speaking, writing skills).
- *Formal education opportunities* (16%): Attend a military course; receive instruction on leadership; attend college courses or pursue a degree; and complete continuing education.
- *Feedback from others* (8%): Receive mentorship; observe or interact with others (e.g., job shadow); be allowed to fail in a learning environment; and receive feedback in general from superiors, peers and subordinates.

## Self Development

Self development is the planned, goal-oriented learning that reinforces and expands the depth and breadth of an individual's knowledge base, self-awareness, and situational awareness. Self development complements what has been learned in the classroom and on the job, enhances professional competence and helps leaders achieve personal objectives (AR 350-1). As mentioned previously, over 70% of civilian leaders believe self development has been effective in preparing them for new levels of leadership or responsibility. In terms of its impact on development, 53% of civilian leaders believe self development has had a large or great impact on their development, while 32% believe it has had a moderate impact.

Eighty-seven percent of Army civilian leaders indicate they engaged in self development in the past year. Civilian leaders most often engage in self development to gain knowledge in new areas (60%), to complete mandatory training (54%), to develop new skills (52%), and to maintain proficiency in their job (43%). Civilian leaders also engage in self development (though less often) to overcome shortcomings in their abilities (32%) and to move to another job (14%).

Belief in organizational support for self development by civilian leaders is weak. Sixty-one percent of managers/senior supervisors and 54% of first line supervisors/leaders agree their organization expects them to participate in self development other than mandatory training. However, less than half of civilian leaders (43%) agree their organization makes time available for self development (31% disagree). In sum, this area indicates deficiencies that should be addressed.

Comments on specific self development activities indicate Army civilians most frequently engage in *formal* types of self development. In addition to college courses, other formal methods include: technical or job-specific training, distance or distributed learning, professional military education (including CES) courses, training on leadership, attendance at conferences, seminars, workshops, or professional meetings, maintaining certifications, licensures, accreditation and credentials, seeking or volunteering for new experiences at work, and mandatory training.

Civilians also engage in *less formal* self development activities including: professional reading, research or self-study (e.g., reading books or journals), networking or interacting with others, learning a foreign language, on-the-job training, staying up-to-date in a specialty area, improving a skill, receiving mentoring, and joining a professional organization. Civilians less often indicate they engage in self development that occurs completely outside of work, though these types of activities include teaching or instructing others, various methods of self help or betterment, volunteering in the community, and seeking religious growth and family life activities. Some civilians who did not participate in self development in the past year offered insight on reasons why, which include a lack of time, incentive or encouragement, or that they requested but were not approved to participate in certain training.

## **Institutional Training and Education**

Army guidance states the purpose of the institutional domain is to provide “Soldiers, leaders, and Army civilians the key knowledge, skills, and attributes required to operate successfully in any environment” (AR 350-1, p.47). A majority of civilian leaders hold a favorable view toward institutional training and realize the benefits and importance of course attendance:

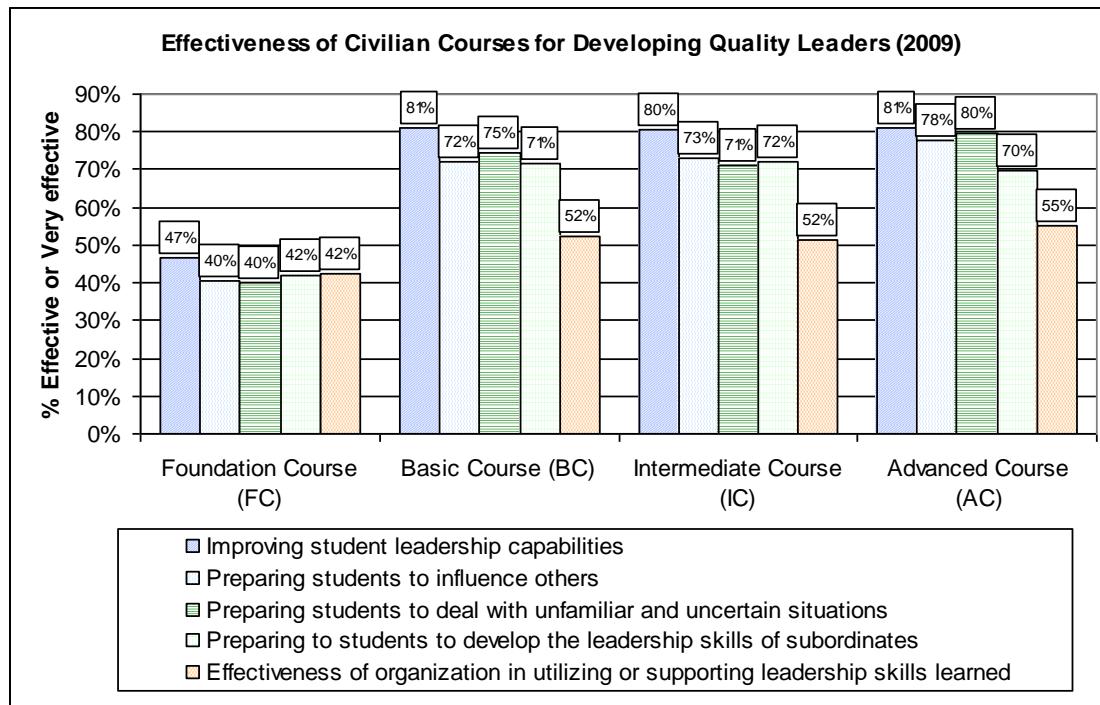
- 83% of civilian leaders agree attendance at institutional training courses is beneficial to them in ways beyond just meeting educational requirements (13% neither agree nor disagree and only 4% disagree).
- 57% of managers/senior supervisors and 45% of first line supervisors/leaders agree instruction from Army institutional training has provided a foundation that helps them get more learning out of everyday experiences such as garrison and deployment operations (13% and 16% disagree, respectively).
- 56% of civilian leaders agree it is important to their superiors that they attend institutional training (26% neither agree nor disagree and 18% disagree).

Similar to uniformed leaders, Army civilian leaders favor resident courses over non-resident and distributed learning (dL) as a method of course attendance. This is demonstrated in the percentage of civilian leaders who indicate the positive impact each method has had on their development. Forty-six percent of managers/senior supervisors and 40% of first line supervisors/leaders believe Army-provided institutional training (resident courses) has had a large or great impact on their development (about 30% believe it has had a moderate impact). In comparison, 26% of civilians in each of these cohorts believe Army-provided distance or distributed learning (nonresident courses) has had a large or great impact on their development and 34% rate the impact as moderate.

Recent graduates of courses within the Civilian Education System (CES) generally rate their educational experiences positively. Course ratings by graduates of the Advanced Course (AC), Intermediate Course (IC) and Basic Course (BC) tend to show similar response patterns. These courses are conducted through blended learning, a combination of distributed learning (dL) and resident instruction. Ratings for the Foundation Course (FC), which is completed only via dL, are the least favorable (of these courses) for preparing students for leadership (see Exhibit 6).

Only half of CES course graduates rate their unit or organization as effective in utilizing or supporting the leadership skills learned in the course. This suggests that civilians aren't being taught useful and applicable information, or it means that regardless of what is taught, the work environment doesn't support new skills and knowledge. Either way this indicates a real problem.

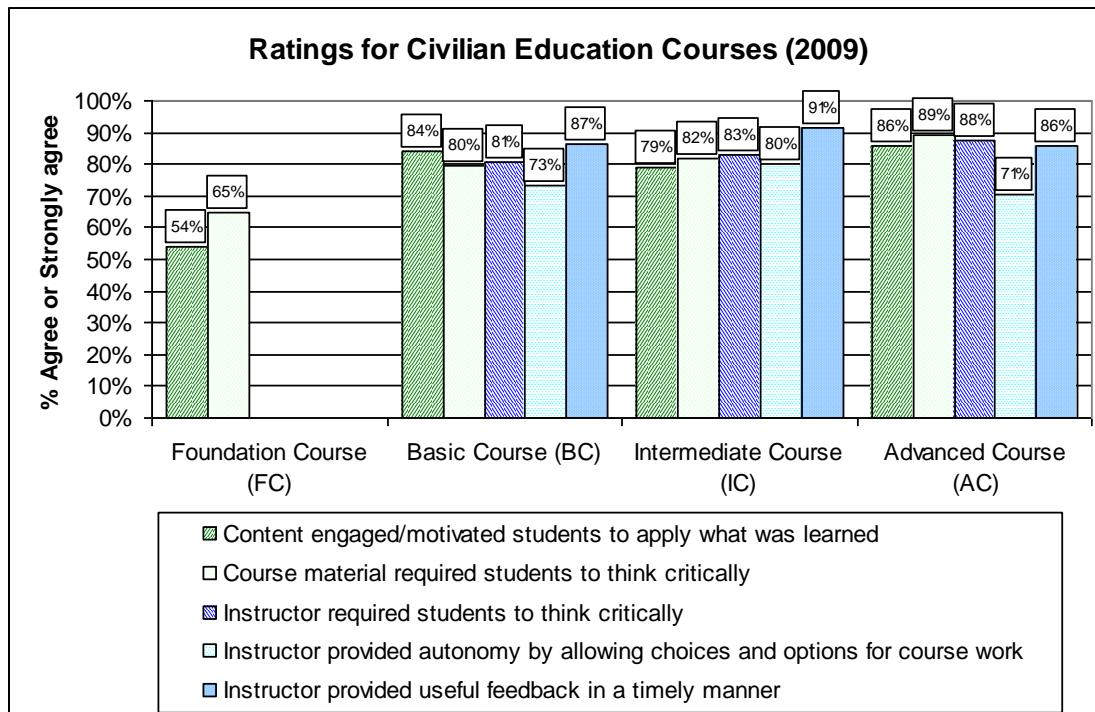
**Exhibit 6. Ratings of Effectiveness for Civilian Education System (CES) Courses**



\*Although it varies slightly depending on the course, the reader is advised to assume a total sampling error of +/-6% for each survey item in the graph.

About 80% of recent graduates of the Advanced Course, Intermediate Course, and Basic Course believe the content of the course engaged them and motivated them to apply what they learned, and that the course material challenged them to think critically (see Exhibit 7). Recent graduates of these courses also agree the instructors required them to think critically, provided autonomy by allowing choices and options for course work and activities, and provided useful feedback in a timely manner. Recent graduates of the Foundation Course less often rate the course content and material as favorable, though more than one-half believe the course content engaged them and motivated them to apply what they learned, and almost two-thirds believe the course material required them to think critically. These course evaluations are generally much higher than what was reported by uniformed leaders in their respective courses (Keller-Glaze et al., 2010).

**Exhibit 7. Course Ratings by Recent Graduates of Civilian Education System (CES) Courses.**



\* Items assessing instructors are not included for the Foundation Course, as the course is conducted via distributed learning (dl). Although it varies slightly depending on the course, the reader is advised to assume a total sampling error of +/-6% for each survey item in the graph.

### Other Methods of Leader Development

Methods of civilian development not directly covered by the three domains of Army leader development (AR 350-1) are also worthy of mention. Many civilian leaders view less-formal methods of interpersonal learning as having a large positive impact on their development:

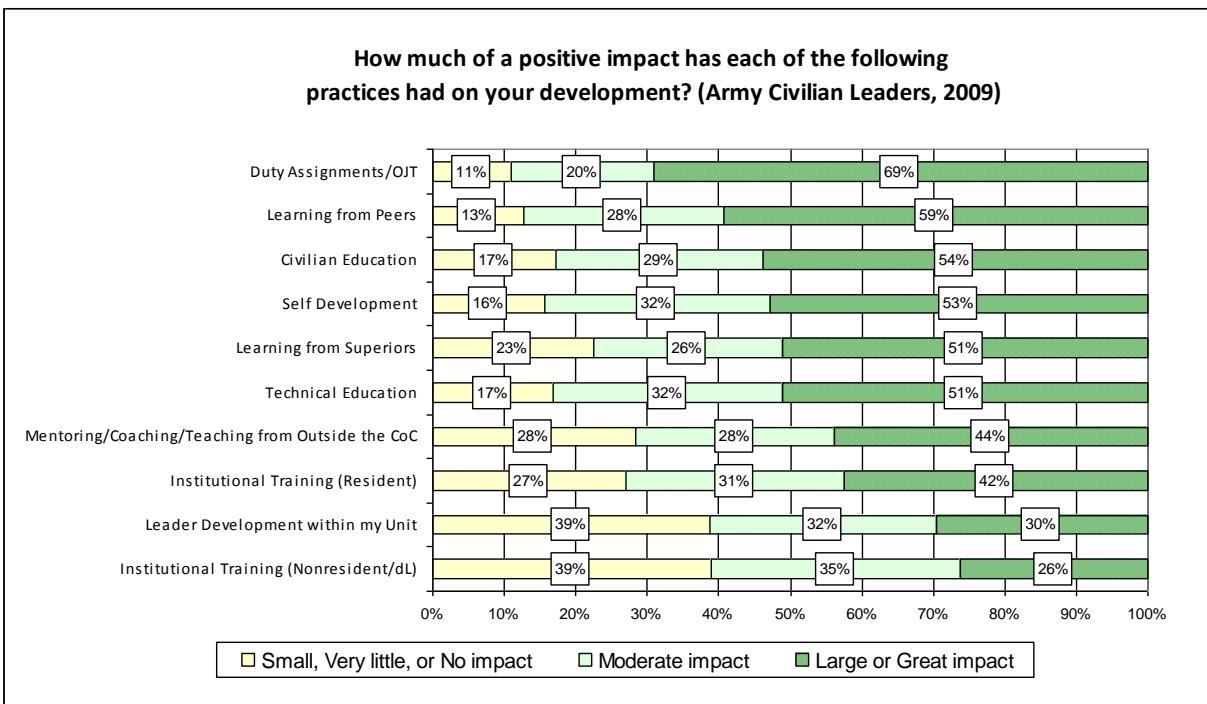
- Learning from peers (e.g., observing, collaborating, and receiving feedback)
  - 59% large or great impact; 28% moderate impact; 13% small or no impact
- Learning from superiors (e.g., observing, job shadowing, and receiving feedback)
  - 51% large or great impact; 26% moderate impact; 23% small or no impact
- Mentoring, coaching, or teaching from someone outside the chain of command
  - 44% large or great impact; 28% moderate impact; 28% small or no impact

Further, more than half of civilian leaders also believe methods of formal instruction have had a large positive impact on their development:

- Technical education
  - 51% large or great impact; 32% moderate impact; 17% small or no impact
- Civilian education
  - 54% large or great impact; 29% moderate impact; 17% small or no impact

The relative positive impact various practices have had on the development of Army civilian leaders is presented in Exhibit 8. Work experience (duty assignments and on-the-job training) is a driving factor that has the greatest positive impact on civilian leader development. Other areas that have a large impact are learning from peers, education in the civilian-sector (e.g., college courses), and self development activities. Practices seen as having the smallest positive impact on civilian leader development are non-resident or distributed learning courses and leader development within units. These findings are largely consistent with ratings by Army uniformed leaders.

**Exhibit 8. Ratings for the Positive Impact Leader Development Practices have had on Civilian Leader Development.**



In summary, the support for leader development in Army organizations shows room for improvement, a finding common among ratings for both uniformed leaders and Army civilian leaders. However, the three domains of the Army Leader Development Model (AR 350-1) appear well supported by Army civilian leaders. Operational work experience is seen as the most effective method for preparing civilian leaders for new levels of leadership, followed by self development and institutional training and education. Note that this same ordering occurs in the uniformed data. Work experiences such as duty assignments and on-the-job training are viewed as having the greatest positive impact on development, while leader development within units and non-resident or distributed learning courses are less often seen as having a large positive impact. It should be noted and examined that the results associated with less purposeful and organizationally-aligned development is unknown. It could be the case that civilians are learning most or all that is sufficient for them to be effective leaders; or they could be learning, practicing, and reinforcing ineffective leader behaviors and practices.

## Conclusion

Results of the 2009 CASAL provide new insights as well as validate previous findings regarding personnel and leadership issues. Prior to this effort, little systematic study had been conducted with Army civilians regarding their perceptions of leadership quality and developmental practices. While previous research (e.g., Civilian Personnel Evaluation Agency, 2006a, 2006b) had discovered that Army civilians were satisfied, the present effort went beyond that by examining commitment types, and applying the Job Characteristics Model (JCM; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). In terms of commitment, there appears to be good amount of affective commitment, more so than among uniformed officers. This indicates that retaining and motivating civilians should be relatively easy. Although satisfaction and commitment levels are strong, stress levels should be continually monitored. The fact that stress is worst among managers and senior supervisors is worth further inquiry. The JCM argues that the core of job satisfaction, retention, and work motivation are: variety, identity, significance, feedback, and autonomy. Current data indicate that most elements of the JCM are consistently being met; however, more work can be done by mid-level leaders to inform employees of decisions that affect their work, and to provide feedback. Feedback also appears as a weakness elsewhere in the survey, in the context of performance counseling. This can be rectified by teaching leaders the value of feedback, and how to provide high quality feedback, and then holding them accountable to a set feedback standard, or by using MSAF in which a leader's blind spot regarding feedback is made aware, followed-up by a coaching session to correct this weakness, or by aligning employee and supervisor expectations.

While trust levels were not problematic, it is surprising to know that about a third of civilians don't trust their peers enough to disclose personal information. Since this is only one data element and only one year, it is difficult to draw conclusions or make recommendations. That being said, increased focus on peer interactions may be helpful. Although there are no data to verify, this could indicate a results-based work climate, in which one's work performance is assessed by output, instead of behaviors that assist the organization reach its mission such as assisting co-workers, developing peers, or mentoring new staff. In fact, in a management by objectives type system (e.g., NSPS) unless their objective is peer-based, time spent helping peers may be considered "wasted", unless it furthers the employee's performance objectives.

The vast majority of both civilians and uniformed leaders report that civilians in their unit complete their work correctly, timely, and at a high quality that exceeds expectations. This is a very powerful message, and the fact that this work is completed by civilians who also are committed and satisfied at work supports that civilians are being managed well.

The largest weakness was expressed in terms of civilian leader development. Part of this may just be the nature of the system and the fact that uniformed personnel are developed and moved throughout an "up or out" system, whereas civilians are hired already qualified for a specific job. Still, if civilians tend to stay in the system, then it stands that leader development should be a priority. One way to improve leader development is to train supervisors to effectively create or call out leader development opportunities (right now only half of civilian

leaders are effectively doing so). Similarly, performance counseling shows room for improvement. Recall, that only about half agreed they had sufficient time to develop subordinates. Therefore, one answer may be in freeing up more time to carry out the duties and responsibilities for developing subordinates either by reprioritizing or shifting supervisor responsibilities, or by increasing manpower.

These findings provide a snapshot of current leadership quality and practices for Army civilians. Further study of these issues is needed in the coming years to identify and track trends and gain new insights. For additional information on these issues and specific findings for Army uniformed leaders, see the full report of the *2009 CAL Technical Report 2010-1 Annual Survey of Army Leadership: Main Findings* (Keller-Glaze, et al., 2010).

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